

subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, and the American people to join me in reaffirming our commitment to combating HIV/AIDS. I encourage all Americans to participate in appropriate commemorative programs and ceremonies in houses of worship, workplaces, and other community centers to remember those who have lost their lives to this deadly disease and to comfort and support those living with and impacted by HIV/AIDS.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-seventh day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-seventh.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 3, 2002]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 29, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on December 4. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting an Alternative Plan for Locality Pay Increases for Civilian Federal Employees

November 27, 2002

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am transmitting an alternative plan for locality pay increases payable to civilian Federal employees covered by the General Schedule (GS) pay system in January 2003.

Under title 5, United States Code, civilian Federal employees covered by the GS pay system would receive a two-part pay increase in January 2003: (1) a 3.1 percent across-the-board increase in scheduled GS rates of basic pay linked to the part of the Employment Cost Index (ECI) that deals with changes in the wages and salaries of private industry workers, and (2) a locality pay increase based on Bureau of Labor Statistics' salary surveys. For Federal employees covered by the locality pay system, the overall average pay increase would be about 18.6 percent.

For each part of the two-part pay increase, title 5, United States Code, authorizes me to implement an alternative pay plan if I view the adjustment that would otherwise take effect as inappropriate due to "national emergency or serious economic conditions affecting the general welfare." For the reasons described below, I have determined that it would be appropriate to exercise my statutory alternative plan authority to limit the locality pay portion of the January 2003 GS pay increase.

A national emergency has existed since September 11, 2001. Full statutory civilian pay increases in 2003 would interfere with our Nation's ability to pursue the war on terrorism. They would cost about \$13.6 billion in 2003 alone—\$11.2 billion more than the 2.6 percent overall Federal civilian pay increase I proposed in my 2003 Budget—and would build in later years. Such cost increases would threaten our efforts against terrorism or force deep cuts in discretionary spending or Federal employment to stay within budget. Neither outcome is acceptable. Therefore, I have determined that a total pay increase of 3.1 percent would be appropriate for GS employees in January 2003.

Because 5 U.S.C. 5303 already mandates an across-the-board GS pay increase of 3.1 percent in January 2003, GS locality-based comparability payments under 5 U.S.C. 5304 must remain at current levels. While my Administration remains committed to the principle of adjusting civilian Federal pay rates in keeping with changes in local labor market rates, our national situation precludes granting larger pay increases to GS employees at this time.

Accordingly, I have determined that:

(1) Under the authority of section 5303(a) of title 5, United States Code, the pay rates for each statutory pay system will be increased by 3.1 percent, effective on the first day of the first applicable pay period beginning on or after January 1, 2003; and

(2) Under the authority of section 5304a of title 5, United States Code, locality-based comparability payments in the percentages set forth in the attached table will remain in effect in 2003.

Finally, the law requires that I include in this report an assessment of the impact of my decision on the Government's ability to recruit and retain well-qualified employees. I do not believe this decision will materially affect our ability to continue to attract and retain a quality Federal workforce. Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Price Index, is at 2.1 percent, well below the 3.1 percent across-the-board pay increase already mandated by current law, and Federal quit rates are at an all-time low of 2.1 percent per year, well below the overall average quit rate in private enterprise. Should the need arise, the Government has many compensation tools, such as recruitment bonuses, retention allowances, and special salary rates, to maintain the high-quality workforce that serves our Nation so very well.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 29. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

November 30, 2002

Good morning. This week, all across America, we gather with the people we love to give thanks for the blessings in our lives. Each family has its own traditions, yet we are united as a nation in setting aside a day of gratitude. We are grateful for the freedoms we enjoy, grateful for the loved ones who give meaning to our lives, and grateful for the many gifts of this prosperous land. On Thanksgiving we acknowledge that all of these things, and life itself, come not from the hand of man, but from Almighty God.

The blessings we have received take on special meaning in this time of challenge for our country. Over the last year, millions of Americans have found renewed appreciation for our liberty and for the men and women who serve in its defense. We have held our family and our friends closer, spending more

time together, and letting them know we love them.

Taking time to count our own blessings reminds us that many people struggle every day—men, women, and children facing hunger, homelessness, illness, addiction, or despair. These are not strangers. They are fellow Americans needing comfort, love, and compassion. I ask all Americans to consider how you can give someone in need a reason to be thankful in this holiday season and throughout the year.

It's easy to get started and to have an immediate impact. Volunteering your time at a soup kitchen, teaching a child to read, visiting a patient in the hospital, or taking a meal to an elderly neighbor or a shut-in are all simple acts of compassion that can brighten someone's life. Every act of love and generosity, however small it may seem, is significant. Every time you reach out to a neighbor in need, you touch a life, you improve your community, and you strengthen our nation.

Earlier this year, I created the USA Freedom Corps office in the White House to harness the power of millions of acts of charity, compassion, and love to make America a better place. I hope you'll consider joining the armies of compassion and dedicating time and energy and service to others. I'm so proud of the millions of Americans who have answered the call to service, enriching the lives of others with acts of kindness. It is a testament to the good heart and the giving spirit of the American people.

There's no better time than this season of Thanksgiving to renew our commitment to helping those in need. The USA Freedom Corps Web site—usafreedomcorps.gov—is a wonderful place to get started. This resource offers valuable information about service opportunities in your hometown, across America, and around the world. You can also get information by calling 1-877-USA-CORPS.

Take the time to find out how you can help your fellow Americans and make this holiday season a season of service.

Happy Thanksgiving, and thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:15 p.m. on November 26 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November